

Why does “Reverse” Migration happens during disease outbreaks or pandemics?

Surat City Experts Perspective



*This Info-graphic is prepared by Urban Health & Climate Resilience Centre of Excellence and its city partner organizations for learning purpose
1st floor, Municipal school no. 160, City light, Surat 395007 Visit us at www.uhcrce.com*

Diverse typologies of “migrants” within Surat & ambiguities of definition

Urban rich migrants & urban poor migrants

Migrants adjusting to rehabilitated slums - AWAS

Migrants in riverside & creek-side flood prone areas

Saurashtra migrants from diamond while & mixed state migrants from textile

Next generation of settled migrants having more sense of belongingness

Migrants living in recently expanded city area where services have not reached

Single female migrants

... & many more

- Surat city has witnessed two prominent examples how migrant families make return movement to their native place during health emergencies.
- In 1994 Plague outbreak, there is documented record how industrial migrants made their best effort to run away from the city.
- Current Covid19 outbreak also shows similar experience after almost 25 years. The news and images of number of migrant workers moving to their native place by mode of walking are viral.
- This happened once they learnt about Covid 19 emergency and resultant lock down declared across the country.

We asked “why this is so” to
80 City Experts



working directly or indirectly with migrants from informal sector. These were health professionals, academicians, social sector professionals, administrators.

Here's what we found.

1. Mental health challenges

Uncertainty about future life in city

Insecurity of safety during lockdown

Fear of catching the disease and death

Fear of police behavior

Discomfort due to rumors spread out of social media

Confusion about situation

84% experts reported



2. Worry about family left behind at native place

Emotional pressure from elderly parents

Advice by relatives to return back anyhow

Worry about children at home

“Family only supports and cares in difficult times” – strong opinion

Attachment with native place

65% experts reported



3. Poor living conditions in city

Loss of daily wages due to closing down industry

Not possible to send money at hometown

Inadequate savings

Increased expenditure during lockdown

Unaffordable house rent and electricity bill

Overcrowding and suffocation in rented place

Resources like water are limited

Lack of adequate, accessible and affordable food

Farming at native as alternative support

Relatively cheaper native place

Relatives can provide financial support at native



60% experts reported



4. No social network in city

Lack of emotional support – feeling “lonely” in city

Help is not accessible for daily needs

No social responsibility attached with city life

Poor access to information

31% experts reported



5. Complains for urban local body system

Perceived failure of Government and system

Mismanagement and sudden announcements

No provision of transport

Gaps in provision of reliable information

Hardships in receiving needed food, grocery

17% experts reported



This analysis records multiple responses.